"The sone rase bryght and schane"—the Theme of the Hero on the Beach in Middle English Tail-Rhyme Romances*

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"The sone rase bryght and schane" — 中英語尾韻ロマンス群に見られる「浜辺に立つ英雄」主題について

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中英語期にイングランド中部を中心に隆盛した尾韻ロマンス群のうち、「ユースタス・コンスタンス・フローレンス・グリゼルダ伝説」と呼ばれるサイクルの六つの作品の中に、古英語詩に頻出する「浜辺に立つ英雄」主題の残存例とおぼしいものが —— 類話群には見られないのに —— 確認できる。これらのロマンスは基本的に、有徳の主人公の流謫、そして結末における愛する者達との再会を扱った貴種流離譚であるが、この主題はその流謫の始まり、もしくは終わりという、物語における重要な転機に現れることが多く、主人公の危難と最終的勝利を聴衆に感知せしめる役割を果たしたのではないかと推測される。またこの主題の存在は、トラウンス（1932—34）の言う「ゲルマン叙事詩の雰囲気をとどめる尾韻ロマンス群」という見解に一つの証左を与えているとも考えられる。

1.

It is believed that in "The Tale of Sir Thopas" Chaucer mocked the style of twelve-line tail-rhyme romances composed by his anonymous contemporaries in the East Midlands, though his consists of six-line stanzas.(1) A.McI. Trounce made an in-depth analysis of dozens of poems of this group, which usually rhyme aabccbddbeeb, and passed a generally favourable judgement on them: "They constitute one of the three broad streams of poetical narrative literature of the fourteenth century in England, the other two being what we may designate as the 'French School' of Chaucer and Gower, and the 'West Midland' of the 'Gawayne' poems and *Piers Plowman*."(2) He indentifies one of the traits of

these romances as their unique "Germanicness", saying, "it [this body of poems] has more authentic echoes of the Germanic epic feeling than any other poetry of the fourteenth century...."(3)

Few scholars seem to accept Trounce's views in their entirety today. Some point out that he has wrongly indentified the dialects and provenance of some of the tail-rhyme romances.(4) We may call into question the assumption that this group of poems formed what Trounce has called "the East-Midland school", which allegedly rivaled the other two schools in late mediaeval England. It should be remembered, however, that a considerable number of well-known romances were composed in this verse form and remain in some major mediaeval manuscripts. The very fact that the father of English poetry parodied the style in the *Canterbury Tales* seems to attest to the popularity, as well as mediocrity, of tail-rhyme romances.

The present paper proposes to examine what look like the residues of the "oral-formulaic" theme known as "the Hero/Heroine on the Beach" in six twelve-line tail-rhyme romances, and to shed light on their possible literary implications.(5)

2.

Oral-Formulaic Theory, originally applied to Greek epic, was first adopted by Francis P. Magoun, Jr. in 1953 for the analysis of Old English poems.(6) Ever since the theory has also addressed itself to poems which cannot be labelled "oral" in the strict sense of the word.(7)

Along with "formula", "theme" is a traditional notion pregnant with a variety of connotations in this theory. Albert B. Lord refers to theme in his *magnum opus* as follows: "Following Parry [i.e., Milman Parry, who initiated the theory], I have called the groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song the 'themes' of the poetry."(8) It was Donald K. Fry who first proposed dichotomising what had been rather loosely termed "theme" into "type-scene" and "theme". His definitions: "A type-scene in Old English formulaic poetry may be defined, therefore, as *a recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event, requiring neither verbatim repetition nor a specific formula content*; and a theme may be defined as *a recurring concatenation of details and ideas, not restricted to a specific event, verbatim repetition, or certain formulas, which forms an underlying structure for an action or description.*"(9) In other words, "type-scene" depicts some oft-seen narrative events including "voyage" or "battle" which are themselves prerequisite components of the story, while "theme" appears as an

ornamental element, basically irrelevant of the plot.(10)

By pointing out the difficulty in distinguishing between Fry's "theme" which, his definition notwithstanding, can be involved in an *event*, and "type-scene", Leif S. Teglbjærg throws doubt on the validity of Fry's definitions, and proposes his own.(11) Myra Stokes, on the other hand, uses the term "topos" for Fry's "theme".(12) They are both criticised by Eiichi Suzuki, who supports Fry's clear-cut definitions and urges scholars to conform to them.(13)

There are, so far as I know, three themes which perhaps satisfy Fry's qualifications, namely "the Exile" (identified by Stanley B. Greenfield in 1955), "the Hero on the Beach" (David K. Crowne, 1960) and "the Cliff of Death"(Fry himself, 1987).(14) However, Alain Renoir, who has published a succession of essays on, among others, "the Hero on the Beach" theme, pays little heed to Fry's definitions and claims that another important theme which rivals "the Hero on the Beach" is "the Beasts of Battle", which is, according to Fry, one of the details composing the "Battle" type-scene.(15) From the start, Renoir does not show much interest in defining notions like theme or type-scene.

Though Fry's definitions are by and large insightful, they do not necessarily work well in the actual treatment of poems. I would argue, with Teglbjærg, that "the Exile", and possibly "the Hero on the Beach" as well, are, even if their descriptions are amplified more than the story demands, somewhat deviant from what Fry calls theme, because they cannot be strictly alienated from the plot. At the present stage we should probably avoid regarding one particular definition or set of definitions as sacrosanct, and the present essay does not aim at proposing new ones. Lord's casual treatment of theme mentioned above does seem to answer our purpose in the following discussion.

3.

In spite of this confusion of terminology, scholars have shared the view that "the Hero on the Beach" is a very important narrative device frequently found in Germanic poetry, whether it is called "theme" or something else. Crowne, who first identified the theme, observes: "...this theme is a stereotyped way of describing (1) a hero on the beach (2) with his retainers (3) in the presence of a flashing light (4) as a journey is completed (or begun). The time of this action is usually dawn; however, the temporal reference is sometimes omitted."(16) Renoir has made it possible to apply Crowne's finding to poems in which a beach does not appear by interpreting the beach as a juncture between two worlds: "A beach is by definition the separation between two worlds — that of the land

and that of the waters — and the 'hero on the beach' necessarily stands at the juncture between the two. The same remark applies to a man standing by the door of a building: in a less obvious but equally real way he stands at the juncture between two worlds — that of the finite inside and that of the infinite outside."(17)

Renoir's expanded interpretation of "beach" has led to the findings of a variety of instances of this theme not only in Anglo-Saxon poetry, but in later English poems and other (chiefly) Germanic narratives. The existence of the theme has been confirmed by scholars in, for example, *Andreas* ll.235 — 47, *Beowulf* ll.301 — 7a, 562 — 71, 1494b — 517, 1801 — 6, 1888 — 99, 1963 — 6, *The Dream of the Rood* ll.63 — 9, *Elene* ll.19b — 46a, 105 — 9a, *Exodus* ll.245 — 51, *Finnsburh* ll.2 — 12, *Guthlac* ll.1289b — 332a, *Judith* ll.186b — 204a, *The Phoenix* ll.90 — 6 and *The Wanderer* ll.73 — 111b in Old English; *Morte Arthure* ll.3724 — 31 and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll.771 — 819, 2069 — 90 in Middle English; *Hildebrandslied* ll.1 — 48 in Old High German; *Nibelungenlied* ll.1837, 1 — 3 in Middle High German; *Haralds Saga Sigurðrsonar* Chapter 35 in Old Norse; *Iliad* xviii, ll.58 — 131 in Greek.

Renoir suggests that, given the instance in the *Iliad*, "the Hero on the Beach" theme may be traced back to Indo-European times.(18) Among Middle English poems, our major concern, the two pieces of alliterative verse reportedly contain the theme.(19) The hero/heroine is not necessarily an epic figure as in *Beowulf*. He or she may be a hagiographic protagonist like Guthlac or Judith, or even Christ in *The Dream of the Rood*, or the bird Phoenix in *The Phoenix*. The retainers are real ones in many cases, but disciples play the role in *Andreas* and crowds of birds in *The Phoenix*. They can be even hostile to the hero as in *Beowulf* ll.1494b — 517. The beach may be, besides what the word literally signifies, for example, a sepulchre in *The Dream of the Rood*, a door in *Finnsburh* and *Nibelungenlied*, a wall in *The Wanderer*, and a bridge and a gate in *Gawain*, all being a juncture of a sort which divides two worlds either physically or metaphorically (e.g., life and death in *The Dream of the Rood*). The journey is sometimes at the stage of departure and sometimes of arrival, or both. For all the almost disorderly variety of the elements composing the theme, the Hero on the Beach can be fairly easily recognised owing to the presence of a flashing object. The light may be, though with several exceptions, either the sun or a suit of armour which reflects it. When the sun is mentioned, dawning is almost invariably referred to as well, though the temporal reference is, as Crowne says, optional.

Crowne reports that "the theme of the Hero on the Beach frequently precedes a description of (or reference to) a scene of carnage in which the theme of the Beasts of

Battle is used."[20] Carol J. Wolf views the theme in a different light, however, saying, "The 'hero on the beach' theme carries with it...strong associations of victory. Almost invariably, the journey of the hero is either the prelude or the sequel to a triumph."[21] It may be claimed that these apparently incompatible interpretations of the literary implications of the theme actually go well together. Reference to the Hero on the Beach would perhaps let the audience realise that they have come to the climax of the story, where carnage is common, and at the same time assure them of the hero/heroine's ultimate victory. The theme can be, if handled effectively, an excellent rhetorical device which enhances the audience's suspense and expectations.

4.

4. 1.

Among Middle English tail-rhyme romances touched upon in 1, there is a cycle named "Eustace-Constance-Florence-Griselda legends" in which a generally virtuous hero/heroine is tried by fate. They are: *Emaré*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, *Octavian* (there are two versions, Northern and Southern), *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Torrent of Portyngale*, *Sir Triamour* and *The King of Tars*.[22] They all consist of twelve-line tail-rhyme stanzas, except the six-line-stanzaic Southern *Octavian*. We shall demonstrate that the theme of the Hero on the Beach is found in these romances excluding the Southern *Octavian*, *Sir Triamour* and *The King of Tars*. The instances of the theme in the six romances may be schematised as follows.[23]

Passage	Hero(ine)	Beach	Retainers	Light	Journey	Dawn
Octavian 421–83	Octavian	Island	Lioness	Armour	D	–
1585–96	Octavian	—	Lioness	Armour	D	–
Isumbras 193–207	Isumbras	Beach	Wife, Son	Top-castle	A & D	–
Eglamour 358–81	Eglamour	Beach	Boar	Sun, Helms	A	+
Torrent 1843–66	Desonell	Beach	Sons	Sun, Tower	A	+
Emaré 349–60	Emaré	Beach	Kadore	Robe	A	–
685–708	Emaré	Beach	Jurdan, Son	Robe	A	–
Florence 1502–42	Florence	Woods	Tyrry	Saddle, Bridle, Her Face	D	–

D:Departure, A:Arrival

Let us now consider the three stories where the protagonists are male.

4. 2.

The following are quotations from the Northern version of *Octavian*(mid-14th century, Northern) contained in Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff.2.38(1,731 lines), where the Hero on the Beach seems to be found.(24)

A.

The schypp come be an yle syde,
The schyppman bade þem þere abyde:
'Fresche watur haue we none.'
Besyde them was a roche hye,
A well feyre welle there they sye
Come strykyng ouyr a stone.
Two men to the londe they sente,
Vp by the streme they wente,
The welle they fonde anone.
A lyenas lay in hur denne
And was full fayne of þo two men,
Anon sche had them slon.

So long on ankyr can they ryde,
The two men for to abyde,
Tyll none was on the day.
Twelue men anon can they dyght
Wyth helmes and hawberkys bryght,
To londe than wente they.
They fonde the lyenas denne,
A manchylde lyeng therynne
Wyth the lyenas to pley.
Sometyme hyt soke the lyenas pappe,
And sometyme they can kysse and cleppe:
For fere they fledd away.

.....

They drewe vp seyle of ryche hewe; 481
The wynde owt of þe hauyn þem blewe
Ouyr the wanne streme.

B.

He bad hys modur make hur yare 1585
Into Fraunce wyth hym to fare:
He wolde no lenger byde.
Wyth hur she ladd the lyenas
That sche broȝt owt of wyldurnes
Rennyng be hur syde. 1590
There men myght see many a kny[ght],
Wyth helmys and wyth hawberkys bryght,
Forthe ynto the strete.
Forthe they went on a day,
The heþyn ooste on the way 1595
All they can them meete.

A describes the scene of departure, where the child Octavian (the Hero), a twin son of Emperor Octavian, sails for the Holy Land from an island with his mother, falsely accused and exiled, and a lioness which once kidnapped the baby. It is apparent from the context that the hero and others are situated near the sea. It should be remembered that in the Old English *Guthlac* an island serves as the beach element. The retainer is a lioness which has turned amiable and obedient to Octavian and his mother. A friendly animal is a very common figure in folk tales. Light is rather implicitly expressed as "helmes and hawberkys bryght" worn by the sailors who will take the hero to Palestine.

More than one thousand lines later, B depicts the scene of Octavian's departure again. This time the grown-up hero leaves the Holy Land, where he was brought up, with the lioness (the retainer), his mother, and many other warriors in "helmys and...hawberkys bryght." They head for France in an attempt to rescue his father and twin brother Florent captured by Saracens. A beach is, however, lacking. McSparran correctly suggests that the prototype text could have contained the scene of embarkation somewhere around this part on the grounds that the rhyme scheme is imperfect in this stanza(aabccbddeffe instead

of aabccbddbeeb).[25] This being the case, B passes for an instance of the theme at least as well as A.

One thing noticeable about this romance is that the young Octavian is absent from the scene between A and B, where Florent is exclusively in the spotlight. One is naturally left under the impression that the hero of the romance as a whole is Florent alone. The otherwise obscure Octavian, however, makes his appearances as the Hero on the Beach at crucial stages of the story, and sandwiches his conspicuous twin brother's activities, thereby leaving the romance in symmetry.

The Northern *Octavian* is extant in two other manuscripts, Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library, MS. 91 (the Thornton MS.) and Huntington Library 14615, though the text in the latter is fragmental.[26] The instance A of the Hero on the Beach can be identified in the two, but the part corresponding to B is lacking in them. The direct source of this romance is unknown, but there is a 13th century French version claimed to be close to the ultimate French original of the poem.[27] There is no counterpart of A in the French version, but in the place corresponding to B, the shining armour of soldiers is mentioned as in our romance. We cannot therefore rule out the possibility that the instances considered above in the Northern *Octavian* are nothing but a rendering from the French. Anyhow, one might claim, the light is probably too implicit to let the audience recognise the theme if the passages above are really cases of the Hero on the Beach at all. Incidentally, the theme cannot be found in the Southern version.

4. 3.

Sir Isumbras (early 14th century, East Midland) is a didactic romance whose plot is drawn from the legends of Eustace. Sir Isumbras becomes ungrateful to God at the zenith of happiness. Visited with the punishment of Heaven, he is exiled and eventually separated from his family. At the end the repentant Isumbras is forgiven and reunited with his family, and lives happily ever after. The following is from the text in British Library, MS. Cotton Caligula A.ii (789 lines).[28]

He toke his lady that was hym dere
And ovur the watur he hyre bere,
  His yonge sone also.
In that foreste forth thenne wente he
Tyll they come to the Grekys see;

Forther they myghte not go.
On the londe as they stode,
They sey kome selyinge on the flode
Thre hondreth shyppes and mo.
And on the londe as the[y] seete
They loked down into the deepe:
The shypes they sey glyde so.

The topcastell drawen on hyghe:
All the[m] thowght rede golde they syghe,
So it glistered as they gan glyde.
An hethen kynge was therinne,
Come Cristendome forto wynne,
To walke so ferre and wyde.
The kynge thought he wolde londe
By that forest at the havenne ende,
A lytyll ther bysyde.
The shypes hoved in the stronde;
Hys meyné drowen faste to londe,
And yerne gan they ryde.

Quoted above is the scene where Sir Isumbras and his family, who had to leave their homeland, have just arrived at a Mediterranean (the Grekys see) shore. The hero is of course Isumbras with "his lady" and "yonge sone" as retainers. Light is here explicitly mentioned in the description of the three persons recognising the shining top-castles of the fleet led by a sultan who is to take Isumbras' wife away from him immediately after this scene. It may be said that their journey is completed, because "[f]orther they myghte not go." We may, however, equally justifiably call this situation the beginning of their journey, or more precisely, exile. This is the very beginning of the breakup of the family and Isumbras' real hardships.

This romance is in four other manuscripts besides the Cotton Caligula MS., excluding the ones containing the fragments. In Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library, MS. 91 and Cambridge, University Library, MS. Gonville and Caius 175, the top-castles do not gleam as in Caligula, though the other details are much the same.[29] I have not seen the other

two, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS. 19.3.1 and Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 61.

Though the immediate source of *Sir Isumbras* is not known, there are a number of analogous stories based on the Eustace legend. They are in, for example, Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, the Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, the ME *Gesta Romanorum*, the Digby MS. *Eustace*, the *South English Legendary*, and the *Northern Homilies*, among others.(30) In all of them, however, the description corresponding to the above quotation is much more curt, and no reference is made to the shining object. The Digby *Eustace*, claimed to be the closest to our romance among the analogues, goes: "To one water hy [Eustace and his family] comen gon: / A ship hy founden þer anon. / Þer houer hy mosten seyle. / In-to þat ship he dede him þo, / His wif, ise 3onge children two...."(31) Laurell Braswell rightly points out in her study of *Isumbras*, "The description of these ships...with their 'toppe-castelles' seemingly wrought from gold and their pennants fluttering is an admirable example of the author's ability to elaborate upon his sources."(32)

4. 4.

We shall now take up *Sir Eglamour of Artois* (mid-14th century, Northern). The Hero on the Beach seems to be found in the scene where Eglamour meets a gigantic boar, a trial imposed on him by the Earl of Artois as a condition for the hero to marry Christabelle, the Earl's daughter. The following is from the text in Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library, MS. 91 (1,378 lines).(33)

This nobill knyghte he sayde noght naye,
Bot one the morne when it was daye
  His wayes þan wendis hee;
Till Sedoyne, I vndirstande—
A monethe he trauelde alle by lande,
  And als mekill by þe see;
Till þat it felle, agayne an euyn tyde,
Into þe forrest gan he ryde
  Whare als þat bare sulde be.
Takyn[yn]ges of hym sone he fande:
Slayne men one ilk a hande:
  It was dole to see.

Sir Eglamour vndir an ake
Till on þe morne þat he gun wake;
Þe sone rase bryght and schane.
Into þe foreste forthe he droghe,
And of þe see he herde a swoghe,
And thedir gun he gane.

Bryght helmys he fannd aywhare,
Þat men of armes had leued þare,
Þat þe bare hade slayne.
Till a clyffe þan wendis he:
He saw þe bare com fra the see—
His morne-drynke hade he tane.

After travelling for one month (two weeks, in the other manuscripts), the hero Eglamour has arrived at the Mediterranean region of Sedoyne (Sidon), now in Lebanon. He stands on the beach. The rising sun shines, and the helms of warriors killed by the boar reflect the ray. Where are the retainers, though? Is it too much to say that the boar which is to fight with Eglamour serves the role? One should recall that in one of the Hero on the Beach instances in *Beowulf*(ll.1494b—517), monsters hostile to the hero function as the retainers. It may be also said that despite the dubiety of the retainer this scene is the one most reminiscent of Old English epic poems.

The theme can be observed in the other two manuscripts, British Library, MS. Cotton Caligula A.ii and Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff.2.38.[34] Though no immediate source is extant, the romance is believed to be analogous to *Sir Torrent of Portyngale* which we will consider next. But there is no exactly corresponding scene in *Torrent*.

In the following sections, we will see how female characters appear as the Heroines on the Beach in the other romances.

4. 5.

Critics agree that *Sir Torrent of Portyngale* (late 14th century, East Midland) is a mediocre romance which is based on an earlier version of *Eglamour*, but loosely expanded and amplified.[35] The romance is extant solely in MS. Chetham 8009(2,669 lines).[36] Desonell, Torrent's lover, is set adrift with her newborn twin babies by her irate father,

the cruel king of Portugal. And—

Wyndes and weders haue drevyn,
Þat in a forest she is revyn,
  There wyld beestis were;
The see was eb, and went her ffroo,
And lefte her and her children two
  Alone with-oute ffere.
Her one child woke and be-gan to wepe,
The lady a-woke oute of her slepe
  And said: 'Be still, my dere,
Iesu Cryst hath sent vs lond;
Yf there be any cryston man nere hond,
  We shall haue som socoure here.'

The carefull lady was full blith,
Vp to lond she went swith,
  As fast as euer she myght.
Tho the day be-gan to spryng,
Foules a-Rose and mery gan syng
  Delicious notys on hight.
To a mowntayn went that lady ffree:
Sone was she warr of a Cite
  With towrus ffeyre and bryght.
There fore, i-wys, she was full fayn,
She sett her down, as I herd sayn,
  Her two children ffor to dight.

After drifting, they have been washed ashore near Nazareth. Desonell is literally the heroine on the beach who has just completed her dreadfull journey. Her twin sons, who will later in the story play significant roles in the family reunion, are sufficiently qualified as the retainers. The heroine is greatly relieved to find a city with towers shining in the morning sun.

Eglamour, whose earlier version probably gave birth to *Torrent*, also has a scene fairly

similar to the above quotation. But there is no such scenic detailing of dawn as in *Torrent* in the corresponding passage. It should be added that the Hero/Heroine on the Beach theme in the two romances contains reference to dawn, an element optional but oft-seen in Old English poetry, though the theme appears in different places.

4．6．

The heroine is also set adrift with her child, but twice, in *Emaré* (around 1400, North East Midland). This romance is extant in the unique manuscript, British Library, MS. Cotton Caligula A.ii (1,035 lines).[37] The theme seems to appear after each of Emaré's two driftings:

A.

A boot he fond by þe brym,
And a glysteryng þyng þer-yn,
　Ther-of þey hadde ferly.
They went forth on þe sond
To þe boot, y vnþurstond,
　And fond þer-yn þat lady.
She hadde so longe meteles be,
That hym þowht gret dele to se;
　She was yn poyn[t] to dye.
They askede her what was her name;
She chaunged hyt a-none,
　And sayde she hette Egare.

B.

A marchaunte dw[el]led yn þat cyte,
A ryche mon of golde and fee,
　Iurdan was hys name.
E(e)uery day wolde he
Go to playe hym by þe see,
　The eyer for to tane.

He wente forth yn þat tyde,
Walkynge by þe see syþe,
  Alle hym-selfe a-lone.
A bote he fonde by þe brymme,
And a fayr lady ther-ynne,
  That was ryght wo-by-gone.

The cloth on her shon so bryth,
He was a-ferde of þat syght,
  For glysteryng of þat wede;
And yn hys herte he þow3th ryght,
That she was non erdyly wyght,
  He sawe neuur non s(h)uch yn leede.
He sayde, "What hette 3e, fayr ladye?"
"Lord," she sayde, "y hette Egarye,
  That lye her yn drede."
Vp he toke þat fayre ladye,
And þe 3onge chylde her by,
  And hom he gan hem lede.

Emaré, who refused the proposal of her own father, Emperor Artyus, is cast adrift by him in a rudderless boat, which a week later lands on a beach in Galicia — A. The heroine on the beach at the end of the painful voyage is rescued by the King's steward Kadore and his attendants, who were first dazzled by her shining robe scattered with jewels. The role of the retainer is here played by Kadore, who serves as a kind caretaker, a common figure in folk tales, and he actually becomes her real subject when she marries the King later. The making of Emaré's robe is expounded at full length in the earlier part of the romance. I have argued elsewhere that the robe, which seems to protect her, may be likened to the armour worn by epic heroes.(38)

Emaré is again driven out to sea, this time with her son Seglamour, by her malicious mother-in-law. They finally arrive at a beach in Rome and are rescued by Jurdan, a rich merchant who was also surprised at her robe emitting light — B. The retainers are Jurdan as a caretaker, and Seglamour who is to help his mother in the reunion with her husband and now penitent father at the end of the story.

No immediate source of the romance is extant, but the story parallels a group of stories known as the Constance saga, where a virtuous heroine is calumniated and banished. Chaucer and John Gower made use of the legend in "The Man of Law's Tale" and *Confessio Amantis* respectively. For the source of their stories both turned, it is believed, to Nicholas Trivet's *Chronique Anglo-Normande*.(39) Though the heroine's two driftings and rescues are relatively similar to those in *Emaré*, reference to the shining robe is lacking in these stories.

4. 7.

Le Bone Florence of Rome (late 14th century, North Midland) is also a story of a calumniated wife. The English version of this romance is extant only in Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff.2.38 (2,187 lines).(40) Florence is wooed by her brother-in-law Miles, while her husband Esmere, Emperor of Rome, is on an expedition. Refusing him, she is abandoned in a forest.

.....

He led hur thorow a feyre schawe,
  In wodes waste and wylde;
Euyn at vndurne lyghtyd he,
Downe vndur a chesten tre,
  The feyrest in that fylde.

He seyde, 'Þou haste wychyd me,
I may not haue to do wyth the,
  Vndo or thou schalt abye.'
Sche answeryd hym wyth mylde mode,
'Thorow grace of Hym þat dyed on rode,
  False traytur thou schalt lye.'
He bonde hur be þe tresse of þe heere,
And hangyd hur on a tre there,
  That ylke feyre bodye;
He bete hur wyth a ȝerde of byrke,
Hur nakyd flesche tyll he was yrke,
  Sche gaf many a rewfull crye.

There was a lorde þat hyght Tyrry
Wonned a lytyll thereby,
  In a forest syde,
Thedur was he comyn þat day,
Wyth hawkys and howndys hym for to play,
  In that wode so wyde.
He harde the crye of þat lady free,
Thedur he went and hys meyne,
  Also faste as þey myght ryde;
When Mylys was warre of þer comyng,
He lepe on hys hors and forthe can spryng,
  And durste no lenger byde.

The feyrest palfrey lefte he there,
And hurselfe hangyd be the heere,
  And hur ryche wede;
Hur sadull and hur brydull schone,
Set wyth mony a precyus stone,
The feyrest in that thede.
Sche was the feyrest creature,
And therto whyte as lylly flowre,
  In romance as we rede;

Hur feyre face hyt schone full bryght,
To se hyt was a semely syght,
  Tyll hur full faste they yede.
.....

The heroine hung on a tree with her braids is rescued by a lord named Tyrry. Like Sir Kadore and Jurdan in *Emaré*, Sir Tyrry as a caretaker serves as the retainer. He actually becomes a vassal to her husband at the conclusion of the romance. His finding and rescuing of Florence is made possible by her shining saddle and bridle studded with precious stones, and her own face which "schone full bryght". Florence is never guaranteed lasting safety with the temporary harbourage at Tyrry's mansion, however.

This scene is in reality the beginning of her severer adversities. Mehl observes, "the poem clearly falls into two parts. The first part describes the wars with Garcy [the enemy of Florence's father and husband] up to his being taken prisoner by Emere [Esmere] (ll.1—1265), whereas the second part is entirely devoted to the sufferings of Florence and her miraculous preservation in the midst of all temptation and persecution."(41) She is now crossing the threshold to her trouble-stricken exile — the beginning of a journey.

Unlike the other poems we have seen so far, the heroine is not standing on the beach. It may be argued that here the forest she is in can be looked upon as a kind of beach, or more precisely the sea itself. It, or her entrance to it, distinguishes both physically and metaphorically her native Rome where she has been brought up in relative safety, and the dangerous outside world that awaits her. Given Renoir's interpretation of "the beach" we saw in 3, and some instances of the theme identified by critics, this assumptions is, I am convinced, far from outrageous.

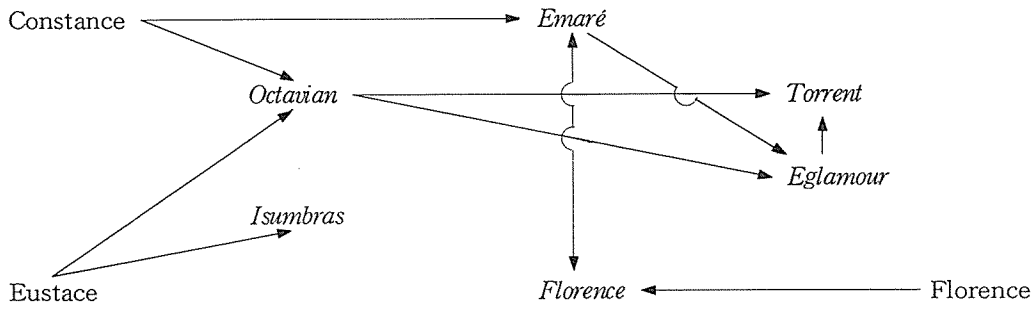
One can readily notice one important feature which this instance of the theme shares with that in *Emaré*: the two noble women, one on the beach and the other in the woods, both emit light by themselves. It is well-known that mysterious light, which probably symbolises virtue, often appears in the presence of a saint or a saint-like person in hagiographies. The light in the two romances is naturally likened to such awe-inspiring luminosity. Here we can see the mixture of a heroine on the beach as an epic figure and a saintly woman as a hagiographic character.

It has been pointed out that the English *Florence* was adapted from a lost French version related to the extant *Roman de Florence de Rome* and *La Chanson de Florence de Rome*.(42) In the passage corresponding to the above, reference is made to the shining locks of Florence in *Roman*. But *Chanson* contains descriptions of more shining objects: "Deus! tant forment reluisent si riche garnemant / Entre l'or et les pierres, dom il i avoit tant! / De la biautei de lé trestoz li leus resplant"(ll.4174—76) or "Les pieres et les parmes, que gitent grant lumiere"(l.4213). We may therefore presume that the mention of light in our version was just borrowed by the English romancer from the French original rather than being his own invention. Even if this is so, however, we should also pay attention to the fact that light is not depicted in an analogous Florence legend found in some versions of *Gesta Romanorum*.(43)

4. 8.

We have seen some possible residual instances of the theme of the Hero on the Beach in the six romances. Though some of them do deviate from Crowne's prototype, one is struck with their relative genuineness: the hero/heroine literally stands on the beach, mostly Mediterranean, in these instances with the solitary exception of *Florence*.

The Middle English tail-rhyme romances share a number of well-known folkloric motifs. Critics argue that our six romances also have some elements in common: false accusation, drifting, lost children, friendly animals and attempted incest, to name a few. Though we do not specify each of these motifs, the relationship of thematic borrowing among the romances confirmed by scholars may be summarised as follows:



Along with other thematic elements, the Hero on the Beach theme may have been shared by different poets (minstrels, perhaps). I would like to push forward my speculation one step further. Let us list the manuscripts which contain two or more of the six romances examined: British Library, MS. Cotton Caligula A.ii — *Isumbras*, *Eglamour*, *Emaré*; Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library, MS. 91 (the Thornton MS.) — *Octavian*, *Eglamour*; Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff.2.38 — *Octavian*, *Eglamour*, *Florence*. Though by no means verifiable, it is interesting to imagine that the scribes involved in copying these manuscripts were capable of recognising and intentionally recording our theme as a sort of technical narrative device.[44]

It is probably next to impossible to prove that the Hero on the Beach theme is *not* found in metrical romances belonging to the schools other than that of tail-rhyme poems. It is also undeniable that the English redactors of at least *Octavian* and *Florence* may have simply borrowed the descriptions of shining objects from their French originals. Even so, the fact that most of the analogues of the six romances examined lack what may pass muster as an instance of the theme seems to suggest the possibility that the tail-rhyme romances possessed a heritage of Old English poetry unseen in other Middle English poems except

for a couple of alliterative pieces. Now we may as well reiterate Trounce's remarks: "[this body of poems] has more authentic echoes of the Germanic epic feeling than any other poetry of the fourteenth century."

It has been a matter of debate to what extent oral tradition was preserved in late mediaeval England. While scholars like Albert C. Baugh maintain that oral transmission played a certain role in producing and performing mediaeval romances, Loomis, among others, is rather sceptical about this view.(45) To discuss this subject in depth is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, and besides, whether Middle English romances were produced, transmitted, and performed orally or not is somewhat irrelevant to the matter of the validity of our observations so far. It is justifiably expected that the residues of older, oral tradition can remain in written poems.(46) Furthermore, though the true successor of Old English poetry may be claimed to be a group of poems of alliterative revival in the West Midlands, two of which reportedly contain the Hero on the Beach theme, such oral residues could equally have been found in contemporary tail-rhyme poems as well.

We may assume, as Renoir claims, that mediaeval audiences lived in more tenaciously "high-context" cultures ("communities in which everyone is assumed to share the same background and concomitant expectations") than we imagine, where, contrary to "low-context" cultures, "for example, the relationship between image and message in literature tends to remain unexpressed, presumably on the assumption that the audience will make the connection automatically."(47) Given the likelihood of this and the plural instances of the Hero/Heroine on the Beach theme we have seen, I would argue that the romancers and/or narrators made use of the theme intentionally with a view to arousing certain sentiments in the minds of their audience. And many in those audiences were probably capable of properly responding to and appreciating the narrative device.

5.

Finally we shall consider what sort of thematic implications the Hero/Heroine on the Beach could have conveyed to the audience. Though we should refrain from making a sweeping generalisation when we treat six different romances with different plots, there may still be some common features in the instances of the theme.

In 3, we have seen that the theme is likely to harbinger carnage, and ultimately, the Hero/Heroine's victory. It is true that a battle with Saracens or a single combat against a monster is also a much favoured episode in our romances, and that as a matter of course

the hero or his army defeats the adversary. Here, however, these fights hardly seem pivotal. Nor are they likely to be directly interrelated with the theme except perhaps in *Eglamour*. *Emaré* has no reference whatsoever to any battle scene througout the story.

What is central to the romances grouped under the Eustace—Constance—Florence—Griselda legends is basically the hero/heroine's exile — the most painful kind of journey — and reunion with his or her loved ones at the end. The Hero/Heroine on the Beach theme in most cases appears at the beginning or end of such exile — probably the most critical moment in the stories. And yet his or her "victory" in the form of reunion with family members, who in a couple of cases play the role of "retainers", is also guaranteed by the presence of this same theme. I would like to argue that in these romances the theme is connected with exile, which is as perilous as a battle or a combat, and reunion that follows hardships.(48)

Sarah L. Higley has recently put forward an insightful view with regard to the beach element of the theme in her essay on *Beowulf*: "The term 'liminality' in anthropology and folklore has been used to describe a period of transition in primitive ritual between one state of being and another, or between one location and another.... The term has literary as well as anthropological application; Crowne's Hero on the Beach depicts a liminal situation in that it shows man standing on some kind of threshold or marginal area (such as a beach) at an important and perilous point in the drama. The ritual reference to a light shining adds the requisite ceremoniousness to what appears to be a 'rite of passage,' ...."(49) She regards the beach as something comparable to a threshold, which the hero/heroine is expected to cross at the beginning or end of a journey to complete his or her rite of passage.

Plunged into the abyss of despair in exile from the zenith of happiness, our romance heroes and heroines also had to cross the threshold in search of happy reunion, in the process of which some of them do seem to have metamorphosed themselves into figures more like those in saints' lives.(50)

NOTES

* This article is based on a paper read for Paper Session I at the Sixth Congress of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies held at Otemae Women's College, Nishinomiya on 1—2 December, 1990. I appreciate valuable questions and suggestions from the floor and those who read the draft. I am also indebted to Professor Yoko Wada of Kansai University, Professor Isao Ueda of Shizuoka University and the fellow members of the Mediaeval English Romance Research Group for making available to me some important books and papers. My thanks are also due to Mr Hiroshi Mitoh of Osaka University of Foreign Studies and Mr Showa Kashima who answered my questions concerning Old French, and Professor Ian C. Stirk of Osaka University of Foreign Studies who improved my English.

(1) See Laura H. Loomis, "The Tale of Sir Thopas," *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales, ed. W.F. Bryan & Germaine Dempster (Chichago: U of Chicago P, 1941) 486—559, and Fumio Kuriyagawa, "Chaucer and Local Literature," (in Japanese) *Collected Papers of Fumio Kuriyagawa*, Vol. II, ed. Shinsuke Ando, *et al*. (Tokyo: Kinseido, 1982)686—703.

(2) A.McI. Trounce, "The English Tail-Rhyme Romances," *Medium Ævum* 1 (1932) 87—108, 168—82; 2 (1933) 34—57, 189—98; 3 (1934) 30—50. At (1932) 87.

(3) Trounce (1932) 89.

(4) See, for example, Lillian H. Hornstein's remarks in J. Burke Severs, gen. ed., *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050—1500*, Fascicule 1 (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967) 121—22.

(5) Part of the discussion in 2, 3 and 4.6 in the following appeared in my "'The Heroine on the Beach in *Emaré*," *Review of the Marine Technical College* 30 (1987) 67—85, but here I have largely revised and updated the content.

(6) Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Oral-Formulaic Characters of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," *Speculum* 28 (1953) 446—67.

(7) I will therefore avoid using the terms "oral" or "oral-formulaic" in what follows, when reference is made to "the Hero on the Beach" theme.

(8) Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960) 68.

(9) Donald K. Fry, "Old English Formulaic Themes and Type-Scenes," *Neophilologus* 52 (1968) 53.

(10) In spite of some scholars' views of "theme" differing from Fry's, which we will touch upon immediately, and my own hesitation to accept his definitions of the two notions, we should probably appreciate his identifying "theme" as an ornamental element independent of the plot. Traditional, if not oral, narratives do seem to contain more of such elements than modern literary works do. It is interesting to note that *bunraku* and *kabuki*, both traditional Japanese theatrical arts, often stage *keigoto*, a highly ornamental, sometimes lengthy, dance-like performance, at the climax of a story, e.g., the wayfaring of the hero/heroine.

(11) Leif S. Teglbjærg, "Oral-Formulaic Theories and Their Application to Middle English Poetry," *Language & Literature* 1 (1972) 69—91.

(12) Myra Stokes, "The Embarcation of the Hero: A Topos and Its Use in *Patience*," *POETICA* 21 & 22 (1985) 1—24.

(13) For his criticism of Teglbjærg's and Stokes' discussions, and approbation of Fry's, see Eiichi Suzuki, "Oral-Formulaic Approach to Middle English Alliterative Style," *Middle English Alliterative Poetry: Its Language and Style* (in Japanese), ed. Eiichi Suzuki (Tokyo: Gaku Shobo, 1989) 31—54.

(14) Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Speculum* 30 (1955) 200—6; David K. Crowne, "The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 61 (1960) 362—72; Donald K. Fry, "The Cliff of Death in Old English Poetry," *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry*, ed. John M. Foley (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers) 213—33. In his tribute to Greenfield, Fred. C. Robinson has recently remarked, "Because of its title and the year when it was written, this essay [Greenfield(1955)], to Greenfield's dismay, was often misclassified by careless bibliographers as a study in oral-formulaic theory, an approach with which it had nothing to do." ("Stanley Brian Greenfield, 1922—1987," *Medieval English Studies—Past and Present*, ed. Akio Oizumi & Toshiyuki Takamiya (Tokyo: Eichosha, 1990) 234—35.) Pace Robinson, however, I am convinced that any careful bibliographer would classify the article as a study at least very closely related to oral-formulaic study, whatever Greenfield's intention may have been.

(15) Alain Renoir, "The English Connection Revisited: A Reading Context for the *Hildebrandslied*," *Neophilologus* 63 (1979) 87; Donald K. Fry, "Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1—113," *Speculum* 44 (1969) 36.

(16) Crowne (1960) 368. He singles out *Beowulf* ll.1963—66 as an example in point, where the hero Beowulf has just returned to his homeland from Dene with his retainers, standing on the beach in the morning sun.

(17) Alain Renoir, "Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival: A Possible Instance in the *Nibelungenlied*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 65 (1964): 70—75.

(18) Alain Renoir, "The Hero on the Beach: Germanic Theme and Indo-European Origin," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 90 (1989) 115. But for an opposing view see Mark Griffith's review of Renoir's *A Key to Old Poems: The Oral-Formulaic Approach to the Interpretation of West-Germanic Verse* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1988) in *Notes and Queries* 37 (1990) 72—3.

(19) Renior maintains that "the Beasts of Battle" also appears in a work of John Lydgate's in "Crist Ihesu's Beasts of Battle: A Note on Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival," *Neophilologus* 60 (1976) 455—59.

(20) Crowne (1960) 372.

(21) Carol J. Wolf, "Christ as Hero in *The Dream of the Rood*." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 71 (1970) 210. Note that both Crowne and Wolf discuss only Old English poems.

(22) *Emaré* is treated as a Breton lay in Severs (1967) for a justifiable reason. In view of its content, however, it can undoubtedly be classified in this cycle. Some of these are discussed in, among others, Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (New York: The New York UP, 1927).

(23) I owe this schematisation to the table prepared by Fry in "The Heroine on the Beach in *Judith*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 68 (1967) 178. For the outline of each romance, see Severs (1967) 120—132 and 136—38. However, the synopsis of *Octavian* found there is based on the Southern version.

(24) The text is taken from Frances McSparran, ed., *Octovian*, EETS os 289 (Oxford: OUP, 1986). Underlinings, which designate the elements of the theme, are all mine in the following quotations.

(25) McSparran (1986) 199.

(26) McSparran's edition covers both in addition to the Cambridge MS.

(27) Karl Volmöller, ed., *Octavian; Altfrazösische Roman*, Altfranzösische Bibliothek 3 (Wiesbaden: Dr.

Martin Sändig oHG.,1883).

(28) Maldwyn Mills, ed., *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent, 1973) 125—47.

(29) The Lincoln MS. is edited in James O. Halliwell, ed., *The Thornton Romances: The Early English Metrical Romances of Perceval, Isumbras, Eglamour, and Degrevant*, Camden Society 30 (London, 1843) and the Gonville and Caius MS. in Charles M. Broh, ed. "A Critical Edition of the Romance of *Sir Isumbras*," Diss. Case Western Reserve U, 1969.

(30) For these analogues, I have turned to, respectively, Walter W. Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints*, Part 3, EETS os 94 (London: Trübner, 1890), Charles Swan, trans., and Wynnard Hooper, rev., *Gesta Romanorum* (London, 1877; rpt. New York: AMS, 1970), Sidney J.H. Herrtage, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS es 33 (London: Trübner, 1879), Carl Horstmann, ed., *Altenglische Legenden* (Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1881), Horstmann, ed., *The Early English South Legendary*, EETS os 87 (London: Trübner, 1887), and Horstmann, "Die Evangelien-Geschichten der Homiliensammlung des Ms. Vernon," *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 57 (1877) 262—72.

(31) Horstmann (1881) 213—14.

(32) Laurell Braswell, "'Sir Isumbras' and the Legend of Saint Eustace," *Medieval Studies* 27 (1965) 142. Though her discussion is not limited to one particular manuscript, the remarks apply to the Cotton Caligula MS. perfectly well.

(33) Frances E. Richardson, ed., *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, EETS os 256 (London: OUP, 1965).

(34) Caligula is edited in parallel with Lincoln in Richardson (1965). The Cambridge manuscript is edited in Halliwell (1843).

(35) See, for example, Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: RKP, 1968) 83—84.

(36) The following quotation is taken from E. Adam, ed., *Torrent of Portyngale*, EETS es 51 (London: Trübner, 1887). But here the flourishings are omitted.

(37) The text quoted below is from Edith Rickert, ed., *The Romance of Emaré*, EETS es 99 (London: Trübner, 1908). The flourishings are omitted.

(38) See Tajiri (1987) 80—83, where several critics' interpretations of the significance of the robe are also surveyed. I have recently read two other essays on this subject: Mortimer J. Donovan, "Middle English *Emare* and the Cloth Worthily Wrought," *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1974) 337—42, and Ross G. Arthur, "Emaré's Cloak and Audience Response," *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. Julian N. Wasserman & Lois Roney (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse UP, 1989) 80—92.

(39) I have examined the texts in Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), George C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, EETS es 81, 82 (Oxford: OUP, 1900), and Bryan and Dempster (1958) respectively.

(40) The text here is from Carol F.Heffernan, ed., *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1976).

(41) Mehl (1968) 142.

(42) A. Wallensköld, ed., *Florence de Rome: Chanson D'Aventure du Premier Quart du 13^{e} Siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librarie de Firmin-Didot et C^{ie}, 1907—09; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968).

(43) I have turned to Masayoshi Ito, trans., *Gesta Romanorum* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1988) for the Latin version, Herrtage (1879) for the ME version, and Frederick Furnivall, ed., *Hoccleve's Works*, Vol. 1, EETS es 61 (London: OUP, 1892) for Hoccleve's adaptation of *Gesta*.

(44) Note, however, that *Isumbras* in Lincoln lacks the theme.

(45) See, for example, Albert C. Baugh, "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation," *Speculum* 42 (1967) 1—31, and Laura H. Loomis, "The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330—40," *PMLA* 57 (1942) 595—627. In recent years some researchers have passed favourable reevaluations on Baugh's points. Among them are William A. Quinn & Audley S. Hall, *Jongleur: A Modified Theory of Oral Improvisation and Its Effects on the Performance and Transmission of Middle English Romance* (Washington, D.C.: UP of America, 1982), Michael Chesnutt, "Minstrel Reciters and the Enigma of the Middle English Romance," *Culture and History* 2 (1987) 48—67, and Murray McGillivray, *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances* (New York: Garland, 1990).

(46) Recall Renoir's finding of the Beasts of Battle in Lydgate. See note 19.

(47) Alain Renoir, "Oral-Formulaic Rhetoric: An Approach to Image and Message in Medieval Poetry," *Medieval Texts & Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987) 242.

(48) In view of these possible implications, the instance in *Eglamour* is more or less anomalous.

(49) Sarah L. Higley, "*Aldor on Ofre*, or the Reluctant Hart: A Study of Liminality in *Beowulf*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 87 (1986) 345—46. She owes her notion of liminality to Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage* (Emile Nourry, 1909).

(50) The exiled hero/heroine in a liminal situation may be a universally found figure in traditional stories. In a *sekkyo* (a form of folkloric narrative popular in mediaeval and early modern Japan) entitled *Shintoku-maru*, the hero Shintoku-maru, a son of a powerful lord, is abandoned at Tennoji (Shitennoji) Temple in Osaka by his father and stepmother, after he is stricken with leprosy. Norio Akasaka remarks that the temple has long been looked upon as a kind of junction where the sacred and the unclean meet. This story properly falls under what Shinobu Orikuchi (1887—1953), a Japanese folklorist and poet, designated as *kishuryuri-tan* (a cycle of stories of a wandering noble), comparable to the romances discussed here. Akasaka also points out that Orikuchi's notion of juncture is close to van Gennep's. See *The Genesis of Boundary* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Isagoya Shobo, 1989) 42—43,82.

(1991. 9. 13 受理)